

Personal
copy of
C. R. Clar

The Case of
Frank E. Thompson
by
W. D. Winters

Advent SYSTEMS, INC.

355 Ravendale Dr., Mt. View, CA 94043 (415)961-9400

Franklin M. Turner

Senior Member Technical Staff

SON-IN-LAW OF C.R. CLAR
9/11/85

C.R. Clar (onetime Chief Deputy State Forester) Personal Comment, June 1987

In 1931 I was working out of Berkeley assigned to the Cal. Forest Experiment Station. My first ^{chief} was born in February that year. About May I was ordered to proceed to Ukiah and there act as an "observer" of the highly emotional "brush burning" experiment - just another hopeless step in a decades ^{old} attempt to reconcile different citizen factions, wild land economics, and vague land management theories. I spent a miserable year - in which the Great Depression played a part (see last Chapter in my book Cal. Govt & Forestry - II (1969)).

I needed to transfer household goods - a wife and infant daughter to a city about a hundred miles away. No one at Sacramento Headquarters offered help of state or agency assistance. One day Frank Thompson called and told me where in Palo Alto to go and pick up a stake-side truck. I did this - returned the truck and asked no questions. It bore a private license, but no identification.

about August of 1931 - the very able Inspector Ed Nelander (assigned when I was, to Ukiah - essentially as supervisor of CDF business on the North Coast) - stepped into a bed of hot coals. (not uncommon where a tree root has burned out under the surface. His lower leg was badly burned. Chief Pratt and Clerk-McNary Inspector Jay Price were in town. Pratt said, "you'd better take care of that". Price said, "No, Marriott, he should go to a hospital." Pratt said, "Clar, you take him to San Francisco." That I did. I forget the hospital named. I returned there next day after the operation. That surgery had been a successful skin graft. Nelander said to me,

"You know, Ray, I was glad to see Frank Thompson as they were preparing me for surgery. He had on a white jacket and mask and he was trying to cheer me up".

Nelander was another man who killed himself for forestry and the people of California. He had been the first field ranger I met in 1927 just after I qualified as a ranger myself. I attended his funeral in Sacramento. He had been assigned to light duty at Davis warehouse because of his very weakened heart after years of fire duty. C.R. Clar

Sacramento, California

Freely edited by
C.R. Clar who was
well acquainted with all
aspects of this truthful memoir

The Case of Frank E. Thompson, Jr.
A memoir of Walter D. Winters
July 1968

I suppose that it might be difficult for the employees in the Division of Forestry during the affluent 1950's, with Civil Service protection and with sufficient funds and equipment to work with, to realize what working conditions were like for similar employees of the Division during the 1930's.

Those were the years when most of the State's operations were conducted under a patronage system and employment was gained only through who one knew, or by belonging to the right political party. *(Note: This was very much true of the 1930's only. Two causes: James Ralph, Repub. Gov., and the Depression death of jobs etc.)*

The writer, however, did not obtain his job with the Division through either of the above channels but became very much involved in the patronage system later.

Having been raised to believe that one made his way in this world through hard work and his individual initiative and integrity. It came as a rude shock to learn that even the State Forester and other high ranking employees were involved in, and subscribed to this system of patronage.

My first experience with the system occurred in the spring of 1931 as Ranger in Madera County.

Word had come down from our Sacramento office that we would hire a few men at \$25 per month plus their board, and thereby have on hand a small crew of men to make initial attack on fires. It was the beginning of our present suppression crew system.

This word got around and the young men from the rural areas of the county came in to inquire about the job. Times were hard and no other work available, so we had plenty of applicants.

In order to be fair I listed each name as they came in, and when my quota was known, intended to hire on a first come first served basis.

One day I received a call from Jack Holliday who was a local insurance agent and also the local campaign manager for Governor Rolph.

He requested that I come see him, and when I arrived he told me I was to hire firefighters for a crew and did I have anyone in mind.

Note: Several of the CDF personnel mentioned herein are to be seen in a printed group photo in Cal. Govt and Forestry-II (Clar) 1969 SPO, page 273. Frank Thompson appears at center of Ranger group photo, page 274.

Walter D. Winters was born in Reno, Nev. His father was a mēer-do-well son of Theodore Winters, a wealthy and palitically powerful rancher of Shoshone Valley who ran for gov-
of Nevada once. Winters City, Cal, was named for him because he bought that area to browse his racehorses. Because Walter's father was cast out - the boy Walter had to sell newspapers in the Reno Red light District to support his mother and sister (whom I know).

CRC

I told him how I had listed the applicants, and he asked to see the list.

When he looked it over he said you can't hire any of these men as none are registered as Republicans.

I inquired why that had anything to do with it and he informed me that under the Rolph patronage system only those registered Republicans could work for and receive wages from the State. I asked what was to become of Democrats under this system and his reply was they either could become Republicans or starve. The choice was theirs.

This type of thing was revolting to me and I argued about it. Finally he said he would pick my crew for me, and that did it. I turned to leave and he asked where I was going and I replied - over to the news paper to bare the whole sordid affair.

He then said o.k. you hire who you want but remember you are a registered Demcorat and how long you survive is any ones guess.

I said I would take my chances for survival and hired my crew as I had originally intended.

I cite the above incident as an example of the times; however, at that time I was not aware that I would later become much more involved. One man who became an employee of the Division through this same system used his influence to intimidate the State Forester and almost upset the entire Division by his nefarious operations.

The records in the State Forester's Office will show that this man Frank E. Thompson, Jr. was employed by the Division on January 1, 1929 and separated, or rather permitted to resign on January 18, 1934.

There is also in Forestry files and in the State Archives news clippings, grand jury investigative reports, etc., pertaining to irregularities of this man's activities while he was employed.

Frank Thompson, Senior, an attorney for the Matson Steamship Company and husband of one of the Matson daughters, resided in Hawaii.

I never knew who Frank Junior's mother was or what became of her. There was a half-brother about 10 or 12 years of age. [1930?]

Note: It is quite possible that Frank, Junior was an illegitimate son. Both W.D.W. and I had indications in Junior's behavior that made us suspect this. Once in a private conversation with me about Hawaii Frank became almost incoherent in denying the memory of Grover Cleveland in respect to his notoriety in such behavior. CFC.

Thompson Senior was a close friend of Governor Rolph and also Judge Smith, Rolph's personal secretary and confidant, and it was through them that Thompson Junior got his job with the California Division of Forestry.

While the rest of us working for the Division were concentrating on doing our jobs as we saw them and remaining static as far as advancement was concerned, Thompson during the five years with the Division held the classifications of Assistant Ranger, Ranger, Inspector, Forest Supervisor and finally the high position of District Forester, putting him on the equal basis with men such as Coupe, Strickland and Fowler. Men who had spent years with the Division to obtain their positions.

It also put him in a position to have ready access to the State Forester and the Chief Deputy. An opportunity which he used to great advantage.

The State had been divided into Forestry Districts and Thompson assigned the coastal district which included the counties of Sonoma, Napa, Lake, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey and San Luis Obispo. His headquarters were in Palo Alto, Santa Clara County.

He was married and had a small daughter. The family lived in Palo Alto.

It was the practice of State Forester Pratt when assigning his personnel to field duties to give them almost complete freedom of operation with little or no supervision from him or his office.

On the whole, field men appreciated this freedom and confidence and worked diligently to uphold that confidence and to build a dignity and integrity for the Division.

Both State Forester Pratt and Chief Deputy ^{William} Rider appeared much impressed with Thompson's ability to be helpful to the Division's cause through his contacts with the Governor's office and certain Legislators.

This appeared to be a period in the Division's history when things at the State Forester's level at least, were predicated on political manipulation more than on practical hard work and public service as viewed by the field personnel.

Mr. Pratt and Mr. Rider were later to learn to their sorrow that while Thompson appeared to be most useful to them politically he at the same time was working for his own interests much at the expense of theirs.

There is always some humor in all serious situations that one can reflect upon as time passes. One such occurred in Madera at the County Fair.

Rolph had been elected Governor and was to take office in January. The fair at Chowchilla was held in September and folks were delighted when the Governor-Elect was to attend and lead the parade.

A large tent was erected and Forestry had a display in the center circle where people could walk around and exit at the same entry opening. There was a machinery display along the walls. The dust was thick and one machinery display was a Case tractor. The attendant was constantly wiping the dust off of his machine.

Jack Holliday, the Governor's county campaign manager, had promised to bring the Governor over to see our Division's fire display and under some difficulties kept the promise.

The Governor was noted for his heavy drinking and at the banquet held in his honor at noon, lived up to his drinking reputation.

After the meal Holliday and others holding the Governor up came into our tent with many followers. The Governor seeing the Case tractor went over and relieved himself in full view of all concerned. He urinated all over the wheel of the tractor. When he went on, the man who kept his tractor so meticulously clean came to me and said, "Who was that S.O.B. that pissed all over my tractor?"

They took the Governor out to ride a beautiful white horse to lead the parade. Several helped him to mount, and when in the saddle he doffed his big white hat and in bowing to the grandstand fell off the horse on to the ground. It took several men to get him mounted again.

So much for the humor of the times.

The writer first met Frank Thompson, Jr. at a Ranger's meeting in 1930. He was then Inspector of the Coast District. I was Ranger in Madera County.

He was such a contrast to other personnel of the Division who were a pretty hard bitten, hard working lot.

This man was suave, neatly dressed and groomed, full of energy and totally different than the rest of us.

There were mixed opinions among our group. Some thought he might be o.k. politically but most felt he would not be able to stand up under the rigorous demands of the fire line.

Frank Thompson apparently assumed
that I would amount to something so he
gave me a gold-plated star badge - paid for
with false five-time slips drawn against the
State - I later learned. I requested this
badge to my grandson Alan Rothkopf. The legitimate
first little bronze "Kistritz ^{Fine} Ranger" badge
I received I gave to my grandson Pongler Turner,
C.R. Clar Dec 1979

In a men's toilet at our office
in Sacto - about 1939 - Thompson
showed me a commercial air pilot's license
in his wallet - undoubtedly forged. The big shot!
he was a miserable pilot, said C.R.
Frank Moore the former U.S. mail pioneer flyer.

*Ranger J
Shasta County*

Probably "Doc" Hufford summed up the majority opinion when he said that by the time Thompson got out of bed, put on his fancy breeches and combed out his mustache the fire would be over the hill and gone.

We had little opportunity to communicate with him, however, as he was always dashing off to keep an appointment with the Governor or with some Legislator. With the group he always stayed at the side of State Forester Pratt or with Chief Deputy Rider.

In any event he appeared to be on a first name basis with all of our county supervisors and the Senators or Assemblymen, and offered to help with any problems that might concern contact with these officials.

We were all amazed at his apparent wide acquaintanceship with our local officials and his willingness to give political assistance.

Thompson always had with him a young man by the name of Harry Alden who acted as brief case carrier and a Thompson booster.

Alden made a particular point of meeting all of the Rangers and to talk about Thompson and his activities. Among other things we learned that Thompson was the inventor of the Thompson sub-machine gun which had been adopted for military use and there were sufficient royalties coming in to make Thompson independently rich.

He also told us that Thompson was now in process of developing a short wave radio which would revolutionize fire communications, that this was now a practical reality and soon Thompson would be off to Washington to obtain licenses through the Federal Communications Commission.

From our discussions with Alden we were led to believe that Thompson was in addition to being a great political figure an inventive genius of considerable wealth.

At this meeting Thompson came to me with an offer to assist with my county officials in the difficulties current in Madera county.

I had been sent to Madera the previous year to straighten out a mess created there by the Ranger who preceded me. I felt that no political assistance from the outside was needed. Especially, I could not yet accept this man as being one of sincere intent.

I was later to learn that my first impressions were correct, and also all that Alden had told us was a fabrication.

Some time later that year I met Thompson's father.

At home one night about 8 o'clock I had a phone call from Thompson. He was in a down town Madera cafe and asked me to come down for a chat.

When I arrived he introduced me to his father and younger half-brother. We talked of many things and Thompson Senior told me he lived in Honolulu and was on his way to Southern California.

When Thompson Junior went to pay for their meal his half-brother went along. After they were out of hearing Mr. Thompson Senior asked me "How is the boy doing?" - referring to Frank Jr.

I told him all right as far as I know. He seemed to be very active and busy.

Mr. Thompson said he was glad to hear it as Frank was kind of a harum scaram boy and when he was allowed a red light and siren on his car and freedom to use it he was not sure how he would behave. He expressed sincere desire that Frank would now settle down and make something of himself. Frank then returned and they left.

My next contact with Thompson Jr. came in December when an oral examination was given for Inspector. This was an oral only as no written examination had been given.

As I recall, the Board consisted of a Mr. Albouze of the Personnel Board, Chief Deputy Rider for the Division and Jay Price of the U.S. Forest Service, the outside member.

Thompson was called in first and stayed for about ten minutes. I was next and questioned for about twenty or twenty-five minutes.

As a result Thompson passed, I failed. So I believe since there was only one position to fill and Thompson was filling it on a temporary appointment my appearance was only routine as a show that there was some competition.

When I came from the examining room Thompson was waiting in the hall. He asked if I would like a low license number for my car. I said I would and we walked over to "O" Street to the Department of Motor Vehicles.

We barged right by a startled secretary at the front desk and into the office of the Director, whom as I recall was a Mr. Youngblood.

Since Youngblood was an appointee of Governor Young who now was to be succeeded by Rolph, Youngblood was concerned about being retained under the new administration..

Thompson assured him that he had personally talked to the new Governor and there was no doubt about him being carried on under Rolph.

I paid my fee for the license and it was later sent by mail. It was W.D.W.-14. The W.D.W. being my initials and the 14 my Forestry badge number.

It was the only favor I received from Thompson, and little did I realize then that later I would become involved in untangling this man's nefarious operations.

Incidentally soon after Rolph became Governor Youngblood was replaced by, I believe, a Mr. Garrison.

Also Thompson passed the Inspector examination and received his permanent appointment. I failed to pass. I often wondered if his connections with the Administration had any influence in his favor? Surely I had much more practical field experience, but under the system that prevailed it apparently was given little consideration.

My next contact with Thompson came just prior to the hiring of the summer fire crew at Madera.

Thompson and Walter Coupe came into my Madera office and after a few words of greeting Thompson announced he was going over to Holliday's office to view my names of men to hire so they could be put to work when the time came.

He breezed out in his usual brusque manner and I asked Coupe what Thompson had to do with the men I was to hire.

Coupe seemed evasive and subdued. A manner foreign to his normal efficient and straightforward way of operating.

He did say, however, that under the present Administration's procedures Thompson was acting for them in approving all names of those who would be hired, even the lowly firefighter working 7 days per week, 24 hours per day at the big salary of \$25.00 per month.

I thought it a hell of a way to do business and said so, but Coupe remained non-committal.

Thompson returned from his contact with Holliday looking somewhat serious and said that he and Holliday had agreed on those I could hire for my crew.

Al Horsett ... San Luis Obispo was a
working pal ... Ranger Harold Bowhay of Kern Co.
CHC

They then left for Fresno to pass on those to be hired there.

That afternoon Holliday called saying he had favored me by convincing Thompson that the names I had selected for employment were in agreement with the Administration's policy and I was free to proceed when ready.

It was a big victory as far as he was concerned and he took full credit for putting it over.

That winter we became involved in the unemployment camps and through their period of operation I saw nothing of Thompson, altho I heard from time to time that he was Rolph's representative for approving those for employment throughout the State for all State agencies.

I later found this to be a fact, from correspondence found in Thompson's office and documents now in the files in the State Archives in Sacramento.

In the meantime Walter Coupe, Deputy Forester in charge of the Division's fire control system, became suspicious of Thompson's District administration.

He had complaints from some Rangers in the District, especially Allen Gossett of San Luis Obispo County and E. A. "Buck" Erickson of Napa County, that personnel shown on their payrolls prepared in Thompson's office and sent to them for signature were not actually working in their counties.

Also emergency fire time slips were coming in for numerous fires purported to be in the remote area east of Mount Hamilton in Santa Clara County. This area was not accessible by road. So Coupe on several occasions flew over it but could find no evidence of any burned-over area.

Coupe reported his suspicions to both State Forester Pratt and Chief Deputy Rider but both admonished him not to pursue his investigations further because of Thompson's close relations with the Governor. He might retaliate and embarrass them.

The above are facts which were confirmed as I later became involved.

It was Thompson's practice to enhance his importance as a political figure, to be sensitive to the financial needs of important citizens, and to give a little gift of either money or a present where it could lead to a future profit to him and a boost for the Administration.

These of course were always paid out of the State Treasury in one way or another.

Money was obtained by making out fake Emergency Time slips on non-existent fires and gifts were bought and billed to the State as fire tools and equipment.

All checks for emergency fires were of course made out to a certain individual and mailed to Thompson. He would bring that person to the bank, have him sign it and Thompson would hand it to the teller and get the money. The individual therefore got some money from a check he never had in his hands and never worked for.

This was a period of hard times and the person rewarded was most appreciative to both Thompson and the Administration for the windfall.

The various presents handed out were obtained by Thompson through the Western Fire Equipment Company. Bob Orr, owner of the Company, had a rather large business with the Division of Forestry and received orders for fire tools and equipment direct from Rangers and District State Foresters of the Districts.

Thompson would go to San Francisco and pick out the presents from the various firms in that city. He would then go to Bob Orr who would purchase them, claiming the dealer's discount.

When delivered, Thompson would pick them up and Orr would bill the cost to the State as so many fire tools for the Coast District.

Mr. Orr later told me he knew this was not a proper way to do business but Thompson assured him it was o.k. with the State Forester and of course the Rolph Administration.

Orr finally lost a considerable amount which the State later refused to pay when they became aware of the situation.

Coupe, regardless of the State Forester's and Chief Deputy's admonition not to pursue his investigation, would not give up. His break came finally through two of Thompson's employees, Charles Camp, an Assistant Ranger in Santa Clara County and Ina Chapin, Thompson's personal secretary.

This opportunity for Coupe came about because of the jealousy of one woman, Thompson's pretty blond secretary.

Thompson had separated from his wife and had moved into the warehouse in the rear of his Palo Alto office. He had a small room with double bunk beds with other limited space for his clothes. He was also dating his secretary.

Inspector Roger Wood and wife Lucille were wonderful foothill ranch type couple. Roger literally killed himself for C.R.F. He lived a few months after heavy heart attack on grain fire in Madera Co. flatlands.

Walt told me he first met them when he was age eleven - driving a jerk-line ~~12~~ horse freight wagon into the Fresno upper foothills. (Jerk-line singlerein was used when more than 4 or 6 horses used. Command is by voice and jerk line to lead bridges). He was whapping some horses - possibly with a long "blacksnake" whip. Lucille came out of a roadside house - yelled at him to quit abusing the horses - get into her kitchen and scrub his dirty face - and she'd fill up his lean belly with grub which he obviously needed. They practically adopted this lonesome country boy.

CRC

Lucille and Roger had no children.

The next day - on my way from Bakersfield to S. to, I stopped at Wood's place near the Plaza in downtown Fresno. Lucille Woods told me that Walt Winters had been sent to Santa Clara Co - and generally why. I was naturally amazed. She told me, in her usually motherly way that I should stay out of the mess and keep quiet because I had a future ahead of me in the Revision.

CRC
Dec 1979

I was especially close to Walt Winters ever since Rita sent me into Madera Co in July 1924 to help out on a big fire ^{brush} ~~brush~~. When the heavy load after Pearl Harbor fell on me as Chief Deputy State Forester I persuaded Walt to come up from Santa Clara where he was then a true political power in his own right - to take charge of Fire Control in Sacramento. I soon got him a Deputy position.

CRC.

(See Note page 16.)

He was taking his meals at Wilson's restaurant and there met a cute little red headed waitress and started dating her also, and finally employed her as a typist, paid from CCC funds. The girl was not a typist and only showed up at the office when necessary to show others that she was working there.

The real secretary was furious about it all and taking advantage of Assistant Ranger Camps dissatisfaction with his own lot there, persuaded him to go with her and tell all to Coupe.

She arranged the meeting at Tracy where Coupe was briefed and there arrangements were made for him to come to Palo Alto during Thompson's absence from the District and go through his desk and files.

Armed with the information from the secretary and Camp, plus that from the files, Coupe called upon the State Forester to take action for Thompson's dismissal. This was done and he was permitted to resign on January 1, 1934.

On the morning of December 27, 1933, I received a wire from the State Forester to report to Sacramento for a 30 day detail.

Since we were operating under a District system it was customary for my directions to come through the District Inspector, Rodger Wood, in Fresno. On receipt of the telegram I called Inspector Wood for more information. He knew nothing of the wire or its intent and was disturbed that his office was bypassed but told me to go as directed.

Since we had been involved in unemployment camps the previous two winters both Mr. Wood and I assumed this was just another unemployment camp assignment.

I went that same day to Sacramento and arrived at the State Forester's office about 4 p.m.

The State Forester was nervously puffing on his pipe and greeted me by saying "Where is Coupe?"

I said I had just got in and he was the first person I had seen as the wire said report to him.

Mr. Pratt told me to go get Coupe, which I did. The three of us sat down and Mr. Pratt looked around and said where is Fowler, and told Coupe to get him.

When Fowler arrived there were several moments of silence, then Mr. Pratt looked up and saw that the transom above the door was open and told Coupe to close it.

I began to feel somewhat uneasy sitting there with this high brass and wondered if I had done something for which I might be fired.

After a further long pause, Mr. Pratt turned to me and said, "We are letting Frank Thompson go and want you to go down there and take over his District. Will you go?"

For the moment I was stunned and the thought was running through my mind, why me?

I was just a lowly Ranger and there were men of much higher classification, such as Inspectors Wood, Biggs, Metcalf and Roach, as well as Deputies such as Fowler, Strickland and Coupe, who I thought would be much more qualified than I would be.

After these rapid thoughts I replied to Mr Pratt that yes I would go if that were his wishes.

I asked when he wanted me to go and he said right now.

It was then after 5 o'clock and Coupe suggested I stay over the night in Sacramento and he and Fowler would brief me on the situation and I could go to Palo Alto in the morning.

Mr. Pratt agreed and said Rider was in Palo Alto and would tell me what to do.

He then got up, put on his hat and said, "good luck, I hope you make it," and went home.

Coupe said 'we are throwing you into a hell of a mess and I would like to discuss it further but had to leave town now, but Fowler would fill me in.

Fowler and I went to dinner, and anyone who knew Fowler can realize how difficult it was to get any specific details from him. I did learn, however, that enough irregularities in Thompson's activities had been uncovered to call for his dismissal.

I left for Palo Alto next morning somewhat confused and hopeful that Rider would help me to meet my problem there, and clarify my status of stepping into a District Deputy role.

I arrived at the Palo Alto office about 12.30 and met Miss Chapin, the blond secretary, also the waitress-typist, Miss Briscoe.

Miss Chapin was curious to learn if I was the replacement for Thompson and I gathered that she was disappointed in what she saw.

She said Mr. Rider and Mr. Thompson were out to lunch and invited me to sit down and wait.

About 1.30 Thompson came rushing in and gave me a very warm greeting, saying he was so glad that I could come.

He asked if I had seen Mr. Pratt lately and I said, "Only for a few minutes the day before."

I wanted to be very careful not to embarrass him, as I knew his family lived in Palo Alto and I wanted to conduct myself in a way that would not bring any embarrassment to either Thompson or his family because of his leaving the District.

Since Miss Chapin appeared to be all ears toward our conversation Thompson said, "Come to the post office with me to pick up the mail."

As we drove down the street he again said how glad he was that I was replacing him, and that after he had considered all other possibilities he felt that I was the most qualified to carry on the good work he had been doing, and so recommended to the State Forester.

He then told me his reason for leaving was that he had to have major surgery and was going to Hawaii to a specialist he knew there, also the Islands were a fine place to relax and recuperate.

I asked if he was taking his family and when he expected to return and again resume his duties as District Forester.

He replied that he was taking the family and his return to California and his job depended on how successful his operation was and his health afterwards.

Then he said, "Oh, Hell, I might as well tell you the whole story as you will know about it soon enough." The truth is that I am resigning here to save Mr. Pratt from being fired. It was either him or me and I took the rap to save the old man's neck." I said that it was most considerate on his part to save the State Forester at so great a sacrifice to his own career.

He then went into a long dissertation of how Mr. Pratt had signed documents and juggled funds and had tried to involve him in his schemes of fund manipulation.

I thought to myself, how little he knows of what I know.

We returned to the office and before getting out of the car he cautioned me to say nothing to anyone about the conversation we just had.

Mr. Rider was not at the office and was looking rather grim. He asked me to leave him and Thompson alone for awhile as they had a few things to discuss. I went out and the secretary took me back into the warehouse and introduced me to Assistant Ranger Camp.

From Camp I learned that he had worked in the county for the past two years, and was actually an electronics technician. He told me he was also building some radio sets for use in fire control.

This I learned was the same radio development that Thompson was taking credit for and Alden had told us was Thompson's own creation.

In about an hour the secretary came out and said Mr. Thompson wanted both Camp and ~~me~~ to come to his office.

When we got there Mr. Rider suggested that Camp take me out and show me around the county and he would see me the next morning.

Thompson said that he had reserved a room for me at the Cardinal Hotel. It was room 205 and he cautioned me to be sure it was that specific room when I checked in.

I thought it peculiar he had a particular room picked out for me, and later learned that there was a reason which will be explained later.

In my brief talk with Coupe in Sacramento he said I could trust both Camp and Miss Chapin and not to be concerned about their loyalty. I was later to find that Coupe's opinion did not apply in my case.

That afternoon Camp took me to the Almaden CCC Camp where we met Camp Superintendent Kestley.

Kestley was curt and appeared to be a bit hostile. I later found out his reason for his apparent dislike of me.

We then went to the Mt. Madonna CCC Spike Camp and to Morgan Hill where we met George Britton and to Saratoga to meet Earl Renn. Both worked intermittently during the summer fire season.

Camp assured me both were capable men and could be relied upon to carry out the work ahead.

On this trip Camp was cautious about discussing Thompson's operations but kept implying he knew plenty about him and his affairs. I did not press the subject.

Frank Thompson was a member of the Stanford
water polo team. His father was an alumnus.
Frank was bright enough but I can't imagine
him wasting time with books
etc

We returned to Palo Alto quite late that evening and I checked in at the Cardinal Hotel and was given room 205 as expected.

I went to the office early next morning and Thompson was at his desk. Rider came in later and I tried to get him aside to discuss my position with him but Thompson never gave us the opportunity to be alone.

Thompson suggested that Camp take me out again to learn the area and Rider also thought it a good idea.

Rider also said in the presence of Thompson that I should return to Madera as Thompson would not be officially separated from his position until January 1, 1934, at which time I should return to take over his duties.

It was the last I saw of Rider for when Camp and I returned from our trip he had left for Sacramento. So the briefing Mr. Pratt said Rider would give me did not materialize.

On this second trip out with Camp he was more willing to talk and gave me the following back ground of Thompson and his activities.

He said he first met Thompson in the office of Don King who was then the Ranger of Santa Clara County. Thompson was a salesman for a furniture company in San Francisco but lived in Palo Alto.

He seemed to attach himself to King and rode with him almost daily about the county.

King finally got him an appointment as a Voluntary State Fire Warden, with a badge and a red light and siren for his Model A Ford Coupe.

With the badge, the red light and siren, Thompson gained status and rushed here and there showing an air of importance.

He would throw big barbecue parties and invite such politicians as County Supervisor Joe McKinnon and Louis O'Neal the local campaign manager for the election of Governor Rolph, Jack Pacheco local Highway Patrol Captain and other dignitaries. Always those of political importance attended.

Camp said Thompson soon graduated from Volunteer Fire Warden to Assistant Ranger to Ranger, apparently without benefit of civil service examinations. This was Camp's statement, I do not know it's authenticity. * *

* I doubt if the Personnel Board could have been so corrupted even in the Rolph administration. Civil Service constitutional base had just been ... d-14-
CPC

I've always felt that some high put lines that
Ralph would soon disgrace them if he wasn't forced
to appoint an able business manager at least.
CR

Definitely not common within the
old line Division of Forestry - only for
a select few of Ralph's legions. They
were almost exclusively non-civil
service appointees. Ralph

promised prior to election to cut down the
Division Office staff. This he ~~never~~ did -
by demanding each b., assistant ~~transfer~~ for a
regular civil service employee to work
on his staff. Strongly, Roland Vandergift
was Ralph's Director of Finance. Van
was a brilliant, tough and able administrator.
He actually developed a system of coded civil
service positions to outline the precise
number of employees and precisely where they each
worked. Naturally, he had to perform as the
Manager of Civil Government during Ralph's regime,
since the latter never did have the vaguest idea
of the details and dimension of the job.

Van became the first Legislative Assistant - a
servant of the Legislative body. Before and after
Pearl Harbor I worked closely with him when I
was Chief Deputy State Forester. We tried to fire
Harold Bowthorn but we couldn't overcome the Kern Co. Superintendents.
We did sever any State relationship, however.
CR

During one of Thompson's famous barbecue parties that lasted into the night, King became very very drunk and Thompson persuaded him to go home, putting him in his car and starting him off. After he left, Thompson informed Jack Pacheco, the Highway Patrol Captain, that King had taken off in his car dead drunk and suggested that Pacheco check on him.

Pacheco arrested King for drunk driving and threw him in jail.

Thompson immediately called the State Forester and informed him of the situation.

Mr. Pratt, always sensitive to adverse publicity, prevailed upon Thompson to do all possible to get King's release without publicity. This was exactly what Thompson wanted and through Pacheco's connections King was released next morning and nothing more came of it except he soon was transferred into the north State and Thompson became the top Ranger for Santa Clara County. A rapid advancement for a young upstart. Just an example of political influence of the times.

Camp also told me why CCC Camp Superintendent Kestley appeared to be so hostile to me. The Almaden CCC Camp was a Veteran's Camp and had been scheduled to move to Contra Costa County near Mt. Diablo.

Thompson had told Kestley that Mr. Pratt was moving the camp to spite Thompson and to cripple his work in Santa Clara County. He also told Kestley that I was being sent in to expedite the transfer.

The camp was moved about 2 months later and Kestley went with it. I do not believe he knew at the time how badly he had been led into involvement of irregularities of equipment and property purchases on documents prepared in Thompson's office and hastily placed before him for signature without time for reading what he was signing for. This was a regular trick of Thompsons, rushing in for signatures saying he was off to see the Governor and could not waste time for the signer to read what he was signing for.

Kestley later spent several days under Grand Jury questioning to explain his innocence and ignorance of what he was signing for. Certainly Kestley was an honest man and no profit accrued to him in any way.

While we were still on this trip Camp told me why Thompson had insisted that I occupy Room 205 of the Cardinal Hotel. It was "bugged."

SERA
State Emergency Relief Administration ↘
This was the depth of the Great Depression -

I spent the month of July ¹⁹²⁹ in Madera County
inspecting Winters on his big large fires. I
also returned around Christmas 1931 to install
labor Camps for unemployed men. Winters and I
became very close friends. That's why I called
him to Sacramento to take over management of
all fire control work immediately after Pearl
Harbor - when I had top CDF responsibility.
Pratt had essentially retired on the job.
CHC

At a conference in my Sacramento home,
Walt said, "Ray, if you want me in
Sacramento, I'll come. But not if Mr. Pratt
has asked for me." I assured him that I
had been obliged to assume responsibility
for directing the Division regardless of my chief.

CHC
then Chief Deputy
State Forester

Camp himself had strung the wiring and set the microphone behind a picture. The wires terminated at the office desk where arrangements had been made with one of the bell boys to tape record any conversations originating in the room.

I suspect Thompson thought Rider might contact me at night or I might use the telephone. Either way he would be curious to know what the conversations were about.

This was all of no avail as no one came to the room and I made no telephone calls.

The following morning was Sunday and I checked out of the hotel and returned to Madera.

Since Mr. Pratt said my detail to Santa Clara County was for 30 days I was concerned about my duties as Ranger in Madera County.

I had just completed a lease on property near Coarsegold to build a SERA Camp and lumber had been delivered to the site.

I contacted Inspector Wood in Fresno and was informed that Mr. Pratt had arranged for Ranger Jim Smith of Amador County to come to Madera and put up the building. Wood was curious about where I had been sent and about Thompson. All I could say was he was leaving the Division and I was to fill in for awhile.

I was concerned about Ranger Smith coming to Madera as he was known as a squaw man and famous for brawling with the Indians during drinking sprees.

I had worked hard since 1929 to build a good image for the Division which had been badly tarnished by my predecessor there.

I did not want Smith to undo what I had worked so hard to build. I expressed my concern to Inspector Wood and he said he would keep an eye on things for me saying that not much could happen in the short span of 30 days of my absence.

I had at the time in Madera an Assistant Ranger, a George Wiegand, who got his assignment there through Chief Deputy Rider, a friend of his father. Wiegand was youthful and not very reliable, wholly lacking in experience, he made one blunder after another. In my absence he started promoting himself to take over as Ranger.

His contacts with both county officials and citizens met with some amazement and concern as there had been no official notification of my being out of the county.

Note: the reader must recognize that the Division's Funding was heavily dependant upon county funds and that the State appropriation was inadequate until after "Pearl Harbor" 1941

Because of this, county officials contacted the State Forester and were assured my absence was temporary and I would be back to take up my duties before the fire season started in May.

I returned to Palo Alto the following evening, which was Monday, December 31st. I avoided the Cardinal Hotel and got a room in the Barker Hotel which was a rooming house catering to University students. It was cheaper and I was now feeling the pressure of keeping up my family at Madera and living away from home. My salary of \$160.00 per month was being severely stretched to make both ends meet.

After checking into my room, well after dark, I took a walk and happened by the Palo Alto Office and observed a truck and pickup being loaded with cases of canned goods from the warehouse and Thompson was flitting about giving orders. I stayed in the shadows and watched.

What happened to these truck loads and where the goods were finally located will be revealed later.

The next morning being January 1, 1934, New Years day, I went to the office and found Thompson busily going through the files. His attitude had now changed from that of friendliness to one of hostility. He requested that I leave as he had not finished clearing out his belongings and personal correspondence and that he had that day to do so.

I started to look back into the warehouse to see how much was missing and was told rather forcefully to leave since I had no authority until tomorrow. I left, but kept an eye on the building from a service station near by.

The truck and pick up came again and loaded out with cases of food stuff and left.

Thompson stayed the night in his bunk in the warehouse at least till after 1 a.m. when I went to bed. He was gone when I went to the office about 7 a.m. The door was locked and I waited outside until Assistant Ranger Camp came about 7.45 a.m.

I immediately looked in the warehouse to see that most of the cases of food stuff formerly stored there were gone. In Thompson's room all was gone except some dirty blankets on the bunk and some dirty clothes. Camp had no explanation of why the food was taken away or where it could have been subsequently stored.

I called a locksmith and changed all locks with keys to Camp, Miss Chapin and myself.

The "Thompson gold stars" were purchased
by Thompson using falsified fire suppression
cost claims. Only a few of us better
class received such gifts - The Board of Forestry
Members, State Forester and Chief Deputy. I
was at bottom of ladder - but as only
technical trained employee - Thompson was building
an early bridge - so presented me with a gold badge.

R. R. Ken

The first day was a nightmare, as both Miss Chaplin and Camp set themselves up as my counselors and advice came thick and fast.

Because of what I had seen removed from the warehouse previously, my first order of business was a call to the State Forester informing him of what I saw and requesting that he send in Sid Lammerton, the State property man, to take inventory. Also that a news release from him to the San Jose Mercury Herald to the effect that Thompson had severed his connections with the Division and that I was a temporary replacement.

Mr. Pratt said he would rather not do either at this time as the political situation was delicate and I should do the best I could under the circumstances.

This of course was of little help or consolation to me and was further complicated when I picked up the Mercury Herald on January 3, 1934, and saw in bold head lines, "District Forester Frank Thompson resigns from the Division of Forestry." The article then went on to state the reason for the resignation was due to pressures placed upon him by the State Forester to manipulate funds illegally, especially depriving Santa Clara County of its rightful share of the State funds, also removal of the CCC Camp was deliberate to penalize Thompson for his efforts in behalf of good forestry and fire control practices he had so diligently fought for the county.

The article then went on to state that the State Forester was continuing to penalize the County through lackeys sent in to carry out the destruction.

I guess I was the lackey as I was surely treated with disdain wherever I turned.

I mailed the news item to the State Forester and asked that he give out a news release to at least help to clarify the situation. But none came forth. About two months later an item did appear buried way back in the back pages. It consisted of about three or four lines and said simply that Mr. Thompson had resigned and that Ranger Winters was now representing the Division of Forestry in Santa Clara County.

i.e. as District Deputy S.F.

Thompson's District had consisted of the Counties of Napa, Lake, Sonoma, Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey, San Luis Obispo and Santa Clara. There were strong Rangers in all but Santa Cruz. Santa Clara had no Ranger after Don King was transferred. Thompson acted both as Ranger and Deputy for the County.

The County of Santa Cruz at the time also had no Ranger as Thompson had previously got George Gillette transferred out. He replaced him with Paul Smith, an Assistant Ranger, a hot shot character wearing a Thompson gold star and serving him well by doing anything asked of him without question. He was not well liked by the residents of Santa Cruz County and was later transferred to Northern California and replaced by Ranger Charles Wilcher from Colusa County.

George Britton became Ranger of Santa Clara Unit and so remained until his retirement. Britton had great respect for Winters. He and his wife came to Sacramento to attend Winters memorial service in 1979. One of Walt's consistent habits was to suggest to newsmen that they interview his subordinates when detailed news of prison suppression was desired. His men practically worshipped the man.

CR.

It now appeared I would get no help from Sacramento to inventory what I was taking over, so I undertook the job myself with Camp's help. There was no inventory record in the files and both Miss Chapin and Camp said Thompson preferred to keep all such records in his head and not on paper.

By way of equipment I learned that in Sedans there was the Chrysler driven by Thompson and a Chevrolet driven by Alden at the CCC Camp.

There was a Ford pickup with pump and tank which was at the Britton Ranch in Morgan Hill driven by George Britton when he was working.

There was a county owned Ford fire truck at the Almaden CCC Camp and a Ford pick up in the warehouse.

There were very few fire tools in the warehouse.

But Camp said some were stored at the county yards in Gilroy and Santa Clara.

In the way of buildings there was a fire house with living quarters above at Almaden on county owned property. There were two buildings on two adjoining lots in Almaden built under the WPA Program. From what I could gather at the time the property was State owned although no records could be found in the files. I was to learn the true status of this later.

Of the two WPA buildings one was a 2 bedroom residence occupied by Harry Alden and his wife, the other was a combination office and barracks. It was at this time being used as a Post Office with Thompson the Post Master. Mrs. Alden, however, did all handling of the mail although she had no official position as either Post Mistress or Assistant. She later told me she only did it at the request of Mr. Thompson and as a favor to him. They paid no rental on the residence they occupied.

There was also a small one room cabin at Smith Creek which the renter of the property from the Grant Company wanted removed at once.

This was the entire amount of buildings, tools and equipment that could be found and they were recorded for the files.

Camp and I went to the County Corporation yards at Gilroy and Santa Clara to inventory the tools there and were refused permission to enter the building where they were stored without a specific order from the Supervisor of the District.

Word had gotten around that anyone from the State Division of Forestry was not a welcome guest and should be so treated.

In order to get at the tools at these places I attended a Supervisors Board meeting the following morning and sat in one of the back rows through the meeting.

During my wait I had the opportunity to appraise the members of the Board. The Chairman, Henry Hecker, from Gilroy was in his late eighties and obviously not very alert. Then there was C. P. Cooley from Palo Alto, a hearty hale individual who took no part in board business. I later learned he was caught in some sort of deal not strictly legal and was deprived of his privilege of vote for a year.

There was Henry Ayres, old and infirm, brought to the Board by his wife and in a wheel chair. His wife sat beside him and kept him informed on what was going on. Then there was Mr. Arthur McClay, a tall, stately, distinguished gentleman who had a previous stroke with paralysis on one side. He looked most like a wax figure, only his lips moved occasionally.

Then the obvious boss of the Board was Joe McKinnon, a burly Scotchman that ran the show.

When the Board completed its business I asked to be heard and was granted an audience.

When I stated my name and position and request to enter their Corporation yards to inventory the tools and to use them when necessary on fires all hell broke loose and I took a terrific beating and given to understand that the Board had no use for me or the State Forester and regreted that Frank Thompson who had done such good work for the County found conditions so bad in State service that he had to resign to maintain his reputation.

After the harangue McKinnon moved the Board adjourn without action on my request stating he would take care of it.

He took me into a back room and told me he had formerly been a Sheriff in Hawaii and knew Thompson Senior, a fine man. He could not understand why the State Forester would first involve then persecute a fine young man like Frank Thompson. I of course had to be non-committal, and after about an hour of his lecture he said he would pass word on to the Corporation Yards to let me enter when ever necessary. I also learned from him that he had at his yard a Ford State Fire Truck which he would also release.

He said, "Now that I have done this for you, I have something you can do for me." He wrote down the names of Con Price, Elmer Van Fossen, Harry Alden, Wm. Jones and a man by the name of Redman who he requested that I hire at once.

I explained to him that it was not yet fire season and no vacancies were available. Also that Civil Service regulations dictated who could be employed.

Joe McKinnon, the County boss, was a bachelor living on his prune ranch. His habit was to arise and cook his breakfast about 7 a.m. each day. Winters learned of this and would appear at his kitchen door. Over a cup of coffee Winters eventually convinced McKinnon of what Thompson had actually done.

Much later Winters told me that a "reform" county supervisor had been elected and soon began to give him trouble for no particular reason. McKinnon told Winters to not worry - the newcomer would soon be curbed. Winters explained that soon thereafter someone sent a road crew to pave the private road into the new supervisor's home - possibly when he was absent. Therewith McKinnon had a club over him. In my experience with county governments I found Santa Clara to consider itself the most independent and self-sufficient, with the exception of only Los Angeles Co. Of course, Winters eventually became an independent power there himself, due to his dedication to his job.

CPCLar
1979

At this he flew into a rage and said this further convinced him that the State Forester and I, as his representative, was out to wreck all of the good work in the County that Thompson had worked so hard to accomplish and never at any time had Thompson hesitated to hire any person he had requested of him.

I told him that even if I had a free hand to hire I would not be influenced by pressure, but would hire strictly on the ability of the individual to perform on the job. I had a job to do and it would be necessary to carefully pick my employees.

After he had calmed down a bit I asked him what his reaction would be if the situation were reversed and I handed him a list of names to hire. He blew up again and in his fit of anger said I would tell you to go to hell, by God.

I said I felt much the same way and he replied that you will hire these men or else.

I replied that I did not know that he meant by or else but that I had not asked to come to Santa Clara County to clean up Frank Thompson's mess and would be most happy to go back to Madera where I was getting along fine and was satisfied there.

Incidentally McKinnon had a brother who lived and farmed in Madera and we were the best of friends. This relationship we discussed for awhile.

I left this meeting very depressed. It was certainly not a way to win friends, and right now I needed all the friends and support possible.

Joe McKinnon had such power and influence over the employees at the Court House that when he was displeased with any person the whole Court House bunch was also against him.

I felt the force of this displeasure as no one in the building including the elevator operator would speak to me. It took about five years to overcome this coolness and only after McKinnon finally accepted me. We eventually became very good friends.

I later checked on the names McKinnon had given me and found that Van Fossen was a sort of a chore boy for Thompson, just a hanger on that he used. He had a Ford Model A Coupe and at present was chauffeuring Thompson around.

Harry Alden was attached to the CCC Camp but lived in the Almaden house and spent all of his time going around with Thompson. I believe this was one of the things Superintendent Kestley was nervous about. He knew it was not right to certify this man on the CCC pay roll when he never stayed or worked in the camp or on their project.

Con Price was a Deputy Constable in Gilroy but was incapacitated by a bad heart condition and by Doctors orders not to do any strenuous work except he might walk from his home down the street for a block or so.

Wm. Jones lived over in back of Mt. Hamilton and had long been confined to his bed with rheumatism.

Redman was also on the CCC payroll but like Alden never appeared on the job. At present he was in a SERA Camp run by the City of San Jose in Alamo Rock Park. He ran a canteen and sold candy and cigarets to the inmates.

I do not believe McKinnon actually knew the status and condition of these men he wanted hired. I think not, but as all politicians, was only responding to a constituent's request. I never discussed it with him as we became better acquainted as I did not want to embarrass him.

Camp and I now went to the Corporation Yards and counted the tools, a surprisingly few. Also got the Ford fire truck and stored it in the warehouse in Palo Alto.

When Thompson left he took the State Chrysler and was seen driving it around the county always going like the wind as if he were on some important business.

One day as I went down town to lunch it was parked at the curb with the keys in it. I got in and drove it back and put it in the warehouse.

It was not there long however as the State Forester concluded that it was too fancy transportation for a lonely Ranger and requested I bring it into Sacramento for use there. I believe Sid Lammerton, the property man fell heir to it.

I had driven the State Sedan, assigned to Madera County, to Santa Clara when I first went there. Mr. Pratt now requested I return it to Madera and thereafter use the Chevrolet Sedan that Alden was driving.

Camp and I made the switch at Chowchilla where Inspector Wood brought up a driver for it.

When I took the Sedan from Alden the papers came forth with another blast at the State Forester for grounding Alden. This was not unusual as almost daily now the papers came out with some item about the State Forester and especially the removal of the CCC Camps.

Regarding Miss Chapin, the ~~business~~ house secretary,
Old Anna Puffy - Puff's longtime sister - and
prodder - said to me confidentially one day -
"I think you'll find that Thayer's troubles were
brought about by the "women he scorned".

R. B. C.
7/79

The items always ended however with a word from Thompson to the good people of Santa Clara County that he had now just begun to fight and was off to Washington to consult with Congressman McGrath of San Mateo County to stop the Camps removal and to deal with the State Forester.

With all of the publicity, pressures began to build up on me to complete private roads into property promised by Thompson before the Camp was moved.

I began to notice that some of these requests were getting through to Thompson in some way and wondered if Miss Chapin or Miss Briscoe was giving information to him but concluded it was only a suspicion.

I later learned from some of these people that Thompson had offered to use the CCC boys to build private roads but when he resigned he went back and told these same people that the State Forester prevented him from carrying out his promise but some day when he finished exposing Pratt that he, Thompson, would take over as County Forester and would do many things for them.

This became his theme and he worked hard at it and seemed to be gaining much support.

He turned Superintendent Kestley against the State Forester and said I was there to get something on him so he could be fired. Small wonder my standing was low in his estimation. In my own defense I could only say the decision for the Camp removal rested with the ECW people and such decisions were beyond the State Forester and certainly I had no recommendations either for his firing or retention when the Camp moved.

I was disturbed by the way we were being condemned and called Coupe and asked for a meeting.

He suggested I come to Sacramento that night, which I did. Next morning Coupe and I met with Mr. Pratt and Deputy Rider. I explained our predicament there and asked for a news release by the State Forester to set the record straight. Both Pratt and Rider objected to any releases, saying that in silence the whole thing would soon blow over without any publicity.

I then said the wire said I was to report for a 30 day detail and asked if the time might be shortened.

Rider responded in his usual gruff way saying you go back down there and keep your mouth shut and we will tell you when and where to go next.

That was the extent of the help and support I ever got from the State Forester or the Chief Deputy during my assignment in Santa Clara County.

And why I had such a very difficult
time getting the absolutely necessary district
system re-installed when I became Chief Deputy
S. F. in 1941 and it was imperative that the
loose Rangers be brought under much more
administrative control. That was promptly
accomplished when Bill Moore became Temporary
Director under Earl Warren - with the help
of Leg Lindy of the Auditor General William T.
Hannum was later appointed
Director of Natural Resources. C.R. Clark
7/74

ReWalt "Swede" Nelson was appointed
State Forester ... believe about Jan
of 1945 He had spent 20 yrs. in the U.S. F.S.

Shortly after Thompson's resignation the District Forester system was abolished and I became the Ranger of Santa Clara County until 1942 and then transferred to the Sacramento office.

With the news of the change in affairs in the County there were many calls wanting to know the status of outstanding accounts and promises previously made.

I could only assure each that I would look into their problem and see what could be done.

As an example the manager of the local Pacific Telephone Company came to the office with a hand full of unpaid bills totaling \$600.00, a sizable bill for Forestry.

He said he had spent endless hours in trying to run Thompson down to discuss payment but he was always too busy at the time but promised to take care of it soon as he returned from a trip to Sacramento or Washington or some other place. The telephone manager was exasperated and his company was pressuring him for results.

I asked why he had not disconnected the service or appealed directly to Sacramento and he said he was reluctant to do so with a big subscriber like the State of California.

I took the bills and sent them to Sacramento but they came right back.

It was the policy of the State Controller that each phone call in excess of fifty cents must show the name of the caller and the party called.

*There was
a 70 million
dollar
State deficit
at this
time*

Since most of the calls were to parties in other parts of the State and no names listed it posed a problem.

The Telephone Company manager and I spent several nights until two to three o'clock in the morning trying with his phone books to find the names of each particular phone number.

We were having little success so I took the bills and added names at random and sent them back to Sacramento and they were then paid.

I asked Miss Chapin why she had not taken care of these problems and she told me that Thompson had all mail come to a box in the Post Office and he alone collected it. She therefore saw only that part of the mail Thompson wanted her to see.

As a result I went to the Post Office and had the box discontinued for Forestry mail and thereafter delivery to the office was made by carrier.

There was also a call from the San Jose Title Insurance Company wanting to know when they could expect payment on the property at Almaden which was now over due.

I went to the Title Company to investigate and found that the property on which the two WPA buildings stood was acquired in the name of Harry Alden and his wife and that Thompson was making the monthly payments in person.

What he intended to accomplish through this complication one can only guess. Here was a good example of how this man deliberately involved his operations in almost every thing he undertook.

This problem was turned over to Sacramento and I believe Rider finally got it straightened out, and title transferred from Alden to the State.

The peculiar part of the transaction was that Alden never knew that the property was being acquired in his and his wife's name. This was a typical example of how Thompson involved and used others without their knowledge.

I also learned that prior to construction of the WPA buildings at Almaden (and one of them now housing the Post Office with Thompson as Post Master). The Post Office was in the Almaden store with one of the owners as Post Master.

There was some ill feeling on their part when the office was moved and Thompson appointed as Post Master. It all seemed to occur so suddenly that they were uncertain of how it all came about, however, times were hard and politics were playing a big part in all daily affairs and seemed beyond any individuals efforts to combat. So the Almaden store people just accepted the Post Office movement and loss of the Post Mastership as something beyond their control.

There was also a call from the Pacific Manufacturing Company, a lumber yard at San Jose, wanting to know when we were going to move out the buildings they were holding the lumber for.

They said they needed the space for other storage. I went to the lumber yard and found there was lumber for two buildings and that it was for the CCC program.

I then went to the CCC Camp to ask Superintendent Kestley where the buildings were to be constructed.

Kestley did not know of the lumber being on hand or where it was to go. I believe by now he began to also wonder about Thompson's activities and to what extent he might be unwittingly involved.

Several years later Bob Orr shocked his many friends
by committing suicide.

OK

1974

Assistant Ranger Camp knew nothing of the lumber or any of the above problems concerning the property and Post Office at Almaden.

Also my contact with the Sacramento office shed little light on the problem. I then went to the U.S. Forest Service Office in San Francisco and learned that the lumber had been purchased by the CCC program and was for a barracks and office building on a site in Santa Clara County selected by the State.

I arranged with the lumber company to hold the lumber in storage for awhile explaining it was necessary to first obtain a site for placing the buildings. They were very co-operative and I began looking for a proper location for a future county headquarters and finally obtained one on a long time lease from the San Jose Water Company at Alma on the Santa Cruz San Jose Highway. This ultimately became the Santa Clara County State Forestry Headquarters.

Thompson in the meantime was flitting here and there driven about by Van Fossen in Van Fossen's Ford Coupe.

He had now arranged with the Pacific Manufacturing Company to build him a small two room cottage near the state property at Almaden which now appeared to be his headquarters. There was a large 5000 gallon redwood water tank on the hill above the cottage. The contents of this tank will be discussed later.

There was also a call from Bob Orr of the Western Fire Equipment Company in San Francisco.

Bob was an old friend of the Division and its Rangers as he sold to us each year our fire tools and hose. On this call Bob was quite disturbed and wanted to see me at once. We set the next day for him to come to Palo Alto.

What he told me was hard to believe. It seemed that Thompson had over the past several years arranged with Orr to purchase for him at dealers discount such things as gold badges, boats, shoes, cameras, surveying equipment, etc. which were to be billed to the State as fire tools.

Although Orr realized this was irregular, Thompson was such a likable chap and seemed to have such political influence, he, Orr, went along with it. His problem at the moment was that he had recently bought a camera and a surveying instrument as well as some fancy boots which Thompson had picked up and he wondered if I would o.k. its billing as fire tools.

I told Orr that regardless of our long standing friendship I would not enter into any such scheme but would do my best to recover the property and return it to him.

He was considerably embarrassed to have the State with whom he had done business for years learn that he had entered into such an illegal deal with Thompson. However, in view of all of the other individuals and firms victimized by Thompson the Division did not hold any animosity toward Orr for his part.

The camera and surveyors equipment was later recovered and returned to him but the fancy boots I suppose were being worn by Thompson and therefore not recoverable.

The CCC Camp was now in process of moving over near Mt. Diablo and the news was daily condemning the State Forester for penalizing Santa Clara County by taking out the Camp.

Thompson was foremost in the news in his accusations of the State Forester claiming irregularities by Mr. Pratt that had been blamed on Thompson and caused his resignation. Also that he, Thompson, was looking for Washington to lay the whole problem before Congress and it would not be suprising if the State Forester would soon loose his job.

I pleaded with Mr. Pratt to counter with a news release and at least confirm Thompson's resignation and clarify my position there.

My efforts however fell on deaf ears as no such news release came.

I began to note some change in attitude toward me by both Miss Chapin and Assistant Ranger Camp.

Miss Chapin on several occasions invited me to her apartment for dinner saying she had much more to tell me about Thompson that could not be discussed except in her apartment. I always had an excuse not to go there, however.

Assistant Ranger Camp began to intimate that Thompson was not so bad after all and he just might win out in his fight with Pratt and be back again to run the Division or maybe make Santa Clara an independent County with Thompson as County Forester.

I later found that he had contacted both George Britton and Earl Renn suggesting they be careful lest this occur and they would loose out in employment if they incurred Thompson's wrath.

I had received a call from Jack Pacheco, the former Highway Patrol Officer who had been fired and now associated with the San Jose Brewery. I went to see him and found him to be a rough looking and rough talking individual. He wanted to know where Thompson was and intimated he had some important unfinished business with him. I said he probably knew as much as I for the daily news seemed to keep up with his activities.

Pacheco demanded that I keep in touch with him although I do not know why. It was the last time I saw or spoke to him during my stay in the County. I developed a great dislike for him during that short interview.

I began to receive anonymous phone calls both when working late in the office and at my rooming house. The caller in a deep voice would admonish me to lay off Thompson, reminding me that I had a family in Madera which something could happen to. While this disturbed me somewhat I considered it only a harrassment along with others I was encountering.

In driving to San Jose one morning I stopped at a Standard Service Station for gas and when the attendant started to make out the ticket he asked me for how much he should charge out on it. I said for the amount of gas you put in the tank. Why did you ask? He said it was Mr. Thompson's practice to have the ticket show more than was put in the tank and take the difference in cash. I said that Mr. Thompson was no longer with the Division and the practice would cease. The attendant said he was relieved as he too thought it irregular but Mr. Thompson had assured him that he knew the Governor and it was o.k.

There was a SERA Camp in Alum Rock City owned park. This camp was supervised by Mr. Murry, a city employee, and supplied by SERA through the Division of Forestry in Palo Alto.

When I went to the Camp to check up and become familiar with how it was operated and what responsibilities the Division had in it, it was obvious that Thompson had preceded me and had fixed me but good. Mr. Murry, the Camp Superintendent said that he understood that Thompson had been forced out by Pratt and if I was replacing him I could go square to hell, he wanted nothing to do with the Division or its lackeys.

He said he had heard that I was there to move out this Camp as I had the CCC Camp and he would fight me till hell froze over before he would let the Camp go.

I tried to explain my position and that I knew nothing of the Camps proposed removal. I left Mr. Murry and his Camp very much despondent at the apparent reputation I appeared rapidly to be developing wherever I went in the County.

Jim Smith later spent several successful years with
the Cal Youth Authority. But his end was very tragic.
In a drunken brawl he killed his son to death.

Then Jim shot himself. His wife was Indian. His country of
Chief assignment was Amador which he seemed to handle successfully.

CPC
6/74

Although there were plenty of problems in this new assignment I still felt a responsibility to my organization in Madera County. Consequently I usually went back there each weekend to check especially on progress of construction of the SERA Camp at Coarsegold.

This particular weekend when I arrived home late Saturday night my wife said I must call Supervisor Krohn at Raymond as he had been calling her daily and said it important that I contact him. Next morning I called Mr. Krohn and he requested that I see him at once.

I drove to Raymond and met him at his home. He was very disturbed about Ranger Jim Smith who was sent in from Amador County to do the carpenter work on the Coarsegold Camp.

Mr. Krohn said, "You got to get this fellow Smith out of here as he is giving all the squaws the Gonorrhea and it creating a health problem."

I assured him I would do what I could.

On the way home I drove down the main street in Madera past the town's lone theater and was hailed by the theater manager.

It was his practice each year to offer to County and State officials a free pass for their families. Officers such as Sheriff, Constable and others wearing badges could always get in on their badge.

I had always declined his offer of a pass for my family and never used my badge to gain admittance anywhere. He thought me a bit peculiar for turning down the offer since others were taking advantage of it.

As he hailed me on this day I thought it was another offer for a family pass. However, when he came up to the car he appeared a bit hostile. He informed me that I had to do something about Jim Smith and I asked what.

He said he had no objections to Smith personally going into the show free on his badge but now he was bringing with him four or five Indian squaws which he also demanded free admission with him. The manager said he did not object so much to the free admissions but the odor surrounding the Indians was so bad that he was losing his regular customers and something had to be done or he would be out of business.

I told him the next time Smith appeared with his tribe of squaws to refuse him free admittance and I would see what could be done about it.

I went to Sacramento next morning and presented the Smith problem to the State Forester who immediately sent him back to Amador County.

When I got back to my office in Palo Alto Miss Chapin informed me that Mr. Carlton of the SERA Office had called and would be at my office about 8 p.m. that evening for a conference.

I went to the office about 7.30 p.m. and shortly thereafter Carlton's car drove up, and who should meet him at the curb but Thompson. He must have been waiting in the shadows outside for Carlton's arrival.

Thompson ushered him into the office and introduced him to me saying at the same time, "Walt, you sit in my chair at the desk." Making it appear that he was still on the job. If Carlton knew anything about the Thompson affair, he made no reference to it.

Thompson talked about the Governor and politics in general, specifically those in high governmental circles whom he referred to on a first name basis. He spoke of his past dealing with Stuart Moir who had much to do with the SERA program.

When Carlton got the opportunity to talk he said his business there was to inform the State and also the City of San Jose that the SERA Camp at Alum Rock Park would be closed.

He was driving on to San Jose for the night and meeting next day with San Jose City officials to inform them of the decision.

I asked why they were closing the Camp and he said they were not satisfied with the administration by the City.

He stayed about an hour and left followed by Thompson. As his car pulled away Thompson vanished in the darkness.

Next morning I asked Miss Chapin if by any chance did she let Thompson know of Carlton's coming. She denied it but there was no other source through which he could have been informed.

From this experience and some of Assistant Ranger Camp's activities I was now more sure than ever that they were keeping in touch with Thompson and lending him what help they could.

The following day I met with the San Jose Water Company people and obtained a lease on property at Alma for a site to be the future headquarters for the Ranger Unit.

Also had the lumber moved out and arranged for carpenters to put up the buildings.

Fordman¹¹ was sent to the North Coast later, probably
by me. Paul suffered from extremely high blood pressure.
Eventually it killed him, much to our sorrow.

CR '79

Following the day that Carlton met with the San Jose City officials the papers came out in bold type laying all blame for the Camps removal on the State Forester and his local representatives. I had some unpleasant moments with the Mayor who was furious about losing the Camp. As a result I was never thereafter very popular with the City officials.

There was also some news items regarding a possible County Grand Jury investigation of Thompson and Forestry affairs in the County.

Shortly thereafter District Attorney Thomas came to my office and asked what I knew about the apparent differences between Thompson and Pratt.

The news however almost daily carried items about Thompson's fight against the State Forester and his efforts to have him removed from office.

Although Thompson was never seen around Palo Alto I had a strong suspicion that my three employees, Miss Chapin, Miss Briscoe and Camp were seeing him and were now wondering if he might succeed in his fight and again be back in the saddle. I could not blame them much as all they saw in the news was condemnation of the State with no denials of the charges. Also no physical evidence of support from anyone in Sacramento. I was the only State representative and possibly most insignificant in their opinion.

Fortunately on January 13, 1934, Miss Chapin and Miss Briscoe were transferred to the Sacramento office leaving only Assistant Ranger Camp of the old guard. To curtail his activities I assigned him to work in the warehouse and about a month later he resigned to accept a job as radio technician over by Half Moon Bay.

With these three employees leaving I had no one left and was permitted to employ a Dispatcher. This was a young man taking a Forestry course at San Jose State College who came to the office to see if he could get a job.

The young man was Paul Furbush who went on to finish his college and later worked for the Division for many years.

When Miss Chapin received word of her transfer to Sacramento she again invited me over to her apartment for dinner and to tell me more about Thompson's operations while he was in the Division employ. I again declined the invitation with the excuse that I had to go to Gilroy that night.

I had visions, that if I had gone to her apartment, of Thompson popping in and making something of it in the press.

One day a man appeared at the office and asked for Thompson and was told he no longer was with the Division but was evidently some where in the County. He then told me he was the Foreman on the Rolph ranch on Sky Line Boulevard and had been receiving his salary from the Division of Forestry through Thompson and that payments were now two months behind and he wanted his money.

I said I knew nothing of the arrangement and it appeared that the arrangement was most irregular.

He asked what he should do to get his money and I suggested he might take it up with the Governor as it appeared he was working for him and not for the Division.

This may not have been the proper way to handle this problem but since no one in Sacramento was inclined to come forth to give me local support, I felt it useless to expect any in this particular matter.

The man left and I never learned if he was ever paid or not. Certainly he got nothing from the Division.

The County Grand Jury was now investigating Thompson for irregularities in a transaction involving County funds under Division contract.

It was another example of typical Thompson involvement in most every thing he did. This investigation concerned the sale of a dictaphone machine which never was delivered, but somehow through manipulation Thompson pocketed \$146.26 which the dictaphone company finally re-imbursed the County and brought action against Thompson for recovery. Some poor salesman who was fast talked into the deal lost his job.

There was a parade of witnesses during the trial and I was called before them twice.

My testimony however was always discounted by Assistant District Attorney Frank Waterhouse as hearsay. Since I had actually not seen the transactions made.

It was obvious that much political pressure was being exerted on the District Attorney to avoid an indictment.

I was discussing this with George Britton one day at Morgan Hill and he told me his Father was a member of the Grand Jury and would like to meet me. George made an appointment for an evening meeting several days later.

Mr. Britton Senior was very much interested in the Thompson investigation and impatient with the District Attorney's efforts to cover up, or as he put it, not to broaden his scope of witnesses.

From information I was able to give him, Mr. Britton insisted that State representatives be called in and questioned.

As a result Willard White, an auditor for the State Department of Finance, was called to testify, also Mr. Pratt.

Mr. Britton was still not satisfied with the line of questioning by the District Attorney's Deputy as none of the irregularities of which I had told him were brought out.

To overcome this problem I sat up one whole night and typed out questions on small strips of paper and gave them to Mr. Britton so questions could be asked by the Jury instead of engineered by the Deputy District Attorney.

At the next meeting Willard White was called and Mr. Britton had passed the slips of paper with questions among the Jury members and they began to do the questioning.

This tack by the Jury completely confused the Deputy District Attorney and he called a recess and went to get District Attorney Thomas.

When the meeting again took up Mr. Thomas went into a long discussion of the case and then closed the meeting.

It was not long thereafter that the Jury brought forth an indictment based on the dictaphone case. My part in developing questions for the Jury, Mr. Britton believed, was most helpful in bringing about the indictment although it may have been some what out of order for me to have meddled in the case as I did.

I received a call from Mr. Pratt to come to Sacramento as the State Board of Forestry was meeting and he wanted me to report to them the situation and conditions in the County.

I explained to the Board the animosity toward the Division almost universally expressed by both County Officials and those citizens that I came in contact with. Also that Supervisor McKinnon had told me the County would not renew its co-operative agreement when it expired on June 30, 1934.

I also suggested that in view of this hostility the Board might consider withdrawing from the County after June.

About 1947, I appeared before the Santa Clara
Co Board of Supervisors and made the statement
that of all the counties in Calif which ^{should} do something
to protect its own self-contained watershed - Santa
Clara did the least. My scathing denunciation
was at least printed accurately in the
Mercury-Herald (no print). And nothing resulted
then or thereafter.

Ch. Clark
onetime Chief Deputy State Forester
6/74

→ except that Herwee Nash - a Depression Rust Bowl
boy - who rose to Dist Deputy State Forester - who was
at this impressive meeting - still sends me a
giggle "Welcome Card" each year. Outside the Court
house that day he said, "It's time some one told them off!"

Rex Black was also the strong lobbyist for the lumber industry.

Rex Black was Chairman of the Board and was critical of my suggestion, saying that Santa Clara County had both a Senator and an Assemblyman in the Legislature, and we would remain in the County regardless of whether the County entered into an agreement for the next fiscal year. Mr. Pratt sat silently through out it all. So I went back to the County to continue my duties there.

On April 29, 1934, Mr. Pratt called requesting that I come to Sacramento next day as he wanted me to go to Madera with him to meet with that Board of Supervisors who had requested a meeting.

We drove to Madera on the morning of May 1, 1934, and met with the Board that afternoon at 1 o'clock.

The Board chambers was packed with citizens from all parts of the County.

When the Board meeting opened the Chairman, Charles Clark, made a statement that Madera County had been without a Ranger since the first of the year and that this group had assembled to request Mr. Pratt to return me to the County to continue my duties there as Ranger.

He then called on Mr. Pratt to state the intentions of State.

Mr. Pratt responded by saying he appreciated the tolerance of the County in the Rangers absence; however, the State was faced with a grave problem in Santa Clara County and I had been selected to take over and straighten out the problem.

Mr. Clark then asked if this meant a transfer to Santa Clara and Mr. Pratt replied that it was.

There was considerable dissent from the audience but Mr. Pratt was firm about the transfer, promising an adequate replacement in Madera.

At this, Harry Russel, President of the Cattlemen's Association, asked if this meant increased responsibility for me and Mr. Pratt replied definitely.

Mr. Russel then asked if it was a promotion and again Mr. Pratt said yes.

Mr. Russel said then it means he will get more money commensurate with the promotion. Again Mr. Pratt said it would.

At this Mr. Russel addressed the Board saying that I well deserved the promotion and more money and the Board and the people of Madera County altho regretting the loss should not stand in the way of my progress.

After several years employment in
"Comodoro Hodgkinson" which
had little by little paid off the bills
he left in Madras County. He told
me he sent doctors and others one
dollar a month to indicate he recognized
and intended to pay his bills. This
was the Great Depression, I had to
move my family out of a \$35.00 a month
rented house in Sacramento into a
\$25.00 house in order to save just
that much. Pratt never attempted to get
[Capt. Clary] salaries increased in
his 20 year service, to
my knowledge.

This was the first time that I was made aware that my original 30 day assignment was now to become permanent.

Incidentally, the promised salary increase never materialized, which still left me having difficulties keeping up the family in Madera and myself in Palo Alto. Penny-pinching became a necessity.

The month of May saw the approach of fire season and the need for employing men for fire crews.

I got from George Britton and Earl Renn, who I planned to hire as Foremen, the names of prospective fire fighters.

Political procedure for hiring even the lowly fire fighters at \$25.00 per month required approval through the local political boss, who in Santa Clara County was an Attorney named Louis O'Neil.

I took my list of names to his office one morning about 9 a.m. when it opened. The secretary at the reception desk said Mr. O'Neil was not in yet and directed me to a chair to wait.

I sat there until about 11 a.m. and she then ushered me into an inner office and told to wait.

The office walls were decorated with pictures of horses and Highway Patrol Officers.

About 1 p.m. the secretary entered and moved me down the hall to another office with the walls similarly decorated with horses and Highway Patrol Officers pictures.

About 2.30 p.m. a pleasant man of about 60 years with piercing blue eyes came in and introduced himself as Louis O'Neil.

He first quizzed me about Thompson which I was careful to be not too well informed. He then talked at some length about his friendship with Governor Rolph and the part he played as advisor to the Governor. He also suggested that certain business firms should be patronized in any purchases that I might make.

He then asked if he could be of any assistance to me and I handed him my list of names and asked to be allowed to employ them.

He casually looked at the list and said give it to the secretary at the front desk as she did these chores for him.

I took my leave and went back to the secretary where I had started some six hours earlier and she stamped the list approved and I left tired but somewhat wiser in the way politics operated.

Winters was an excellent horseman, probably
by necessity. He told me the rancher he worked
for in the Fresno foothills said he could travel
the night miles to elementary school if he
caught one of the wild horses in the hills and
broke it for riding. This he did, and was
allowed to attend school through the sixth grade.
When he became secure in Santa Clara County
and lived in Los Gatos he attended night
school. He possessed an excellent mind.

CPC

In all the road blocks that were constantly being placed in the way of getting anything done occasionally one gets a break.

Such a break came my way some two weeks after my day in the O'Neil office.

About 7 p.m. in the evening the barn on his ranch up on the Skyline Boulevard caught on fire and a call came into the Palo Alto office for help.

Paul Furbush took the Ford Fire Truck and went to the fire and through his efforts saved the ranch house.

Mr. O'Neil was a great horseman and had several palomino horses which he took all over the State to ride in parades. He also had beautiful silver mounted saddles and tack for ornamentation.

During the fire the ranch hands and Paul got all of the saddles and equipment and horses out of the fire and saved all.

Mr. O'Neil was in Sacramento at a Legislative hearing and his people notified him at once and he came right back.

He was delighted that his house, horses and equipment was saved and later threw a big barbecue at the ranch and invited firemen from all surrounding Cities to attend. It was a gala affair.

In investigating the cause of the fire we found it was caused by one of his ranch hands. It seems it was the practice of both the O'Neil and Rolph ranches to have sent to them men from the Santa Clara County jail to work on the ranches without pay but as a condition of their penalty.

In this particular case the O'Neil ranch hand was in for drunkenness and out there on the ranch there was no access to alcoholic beverages so he made himself a still in one corner of the barn and proceeded to brew his own.

Something went wrong on this particular brewing as the still blew up, setting the barn afire.

When the facts became known he was carted off back to jail and I presume his sentence was lengthened.

As a result of the fire and our participation in its control I never thereafter had any difficulty in getting my names for employment approved.

I just took them into the secretary and she stamped them approved. I had no further personal contact with Mr. O'Neil thereafter.

Word came down from Sacramento that a company of CCC boys would occupy the now vacated Almaden Camp about June 1st which was good news and might help to offset some of our criticism in removing the previous Veterans Camp that was there.

We had started construction of the Forestry Office building and barracks at Alma and it began to look like things might get better.

However, Supervisor McKinnon had notified me that the County would not enter into another co-operative agreement with the State Forester and immediately thereafter the Board of Supervisors appointed Frank Thompson County Fire Warden. He would have complete charge of Forestry and fire control for the County.

Obviously, this would create additional problems for me since the Board of Forestry had said the Division would continue its operations in the County regardless of the County's actions. There was big headlines in the news about Thompson's appointment and what he proposed to accomplish including use of the CCC Camp for his projects.

This was a clever move by Thompson, for although he personally knew he would have no access to the Camp he could, through clever press releases, take credit for any projects that were undertaken by the Camp under our direction.

After his appointment Thompson came to the Palo Alto office flanked by Van Fossen and Harry Alden. Both were much larger men than Thompson and as they walked across the street with Thompson in the middle it looked for all the world like the chief gangster flanked by his trigger men.

He demanded that I turn over to him the County owned Ford Pickup and I refused in the absence of a directive to do so by the County Board.

He left and it only took the time for him to drive to San Jose when that directive came loud and clear by phone from Supervisor McKinnon who also demanded that the County fire house at Almaden be vacated and turned over to Thompson.

Thompson used the pickup for his transportation and stationed Van Fossen at the fire house. We now had at Almaden Thompson, and Van Fossen at the County fire house and on adjoining property was our fire crew in the WPA buildings.

There was only a farmer line telephone service and both their phone and ours was on the same line. When a call to respond to a fire was directed to our fire crew, Thompson or Van Fossen would listen in and if our man, who was new to the area, did not know the direction they would send him off the other way.

winters told me that among a mass
of unopened mail, Thompson had set
aside were letters from his daughter -
about four years of age then -

(
← {

After he was gone they would go to the fire and stand around criticizing the State for not getting on the job, with implications the State was much less reliable than the County.

This was only one of the harrassments we had to endure with Thompson running loose about the County. He had the press with him and our efforts were completely ignored until we had a fire one afternoon in Guadalupe Canyon. This was one in heavy cover which Thompson and Van Fossen chose to ignore because of the heavy work it entailed.

After the fire was controlled and I was walking the fire line I met a young man who introduced himself as a reporter from the San Jose Mercury Herald.

He said his name was John Young and wanted a story on the fire. I told him that this was a switch as it appeared their paper printed only articles submitted by Thompson. He said he personally had been looking into the Thompson stories and many seemed exaggerated. He was after the true facts. We had a long chat out there on the fire line and after that he came daily to get news stories and we for the first time began getting favorable publicity.

I have always been greatful to John Young for his efforts and friendship.

The axe finally fell on Thompson when the County Grand Jury returned an indictment and requested that the County Board of Supervisors discharge him immediately from his position of County Forester. This the County did as of July 31, 1934.

He vacated the fire house and abandoned Van Fossen who later approached me for employment, but I refused. He also left the County pickup in the fire house.

He had been living in his nearby cabin with Miss Briscoe who had a Chevrolet Coupe. This he later took and became involved in a hit run accident near Redwood City and spent the night in the Redwood City jail. Then he disappeared completely. Miss Briscoe's car was impounded and I do not know whether she ever recovered it.

At any rate, there seemed to be a number of people calling up wanting to know of Thompson's whereabouts, but he had silently faded away leaving unkept promises, unpaid bills, and I guess some broken hearts.

The Board of Supervisors were also not through with him as bills began coming in for food supplies and other expenses which they had to pay. The most amusing was the County Fork Pickup truck Thompson drove. The County paid repair bills and for gas and oil on credit cards. They also found that Thompson had collected from them mileage on the same vehicle which amounted to a considerable amount.

Old Corrigan had been
one of Bill Rider's office
staff when Bill was
Supervisor of the Klamath National
Forest.

District Units ^{made up} of several county ranger
units was the only practical way to
administer the entire State from Sacramento.
Pratt broke up the districts to prevent
another "strong man" from exercising too
much power. That was easier than
getting control of the districts. So when
I found it absolutely necessary to reestablish
districts after Pearl Harbor attack (and our
tripled budget - and responsibility) - Pratt
blocked me at the Personnel Board and
Dept of Finance. I still had the
operations responsibility as Chief
Sacramento State Forester

Bill Carr

This I believe was what finally convinced Supervisor McKinnon that all was not on the up and up with Thompson and that what he had been led to believe about the State Forester and his Division was questionable. At least he was more friendly to me during our contacts. And the County did enter into a co-operative agreement again with the State in August of 1934.

McKinnon and I later became the best of friends and when the war was declared in 1941 he was head of the County Civil Defense and appointed me to head up all fire services in the County. Later when the County decided to place all of the Valley floor in a fire District he insisted that I make the survey and set the boundaries.

When the news broke that Thompson had been discharged as County fire warden the Pacific Manufacturing Company, which had sold the lumber and put up the building for him at Almaden, came to me to see if the State would take over the place and pay it out. I said we had no interest in the building but would like the water tank. He said the tank was not theirs and we could remove it from the property.

When we went to remove the tank we found stored in it all of the cases of food supplies I had watched being removed from the Palo Alto warehouse in the first days I was in the County.

The Pacific Manufacturing Company later sold the Thompson house at considerable loss.

Now that Thompson had disappeared from the scene and we were beginning to get a favorable press, Sacramento came out from under their wraps and swarmed down to the County in droves. First it was Sid Lammerton to take inventory, then Carrigan from the accounting office to putter and cluck over past irregularities and to caution me to keep on the straight and narrow hereafter. Then there was Horace Kennedy the Investigator to gather up whatever he could find that was illegal.

The Districts had been abolished and the Division went back onto the Ranger Unit System and now as a Ranger of Santa Clara County I set about to build a Division Ranger Unit out of the mess.

In going over records left in Thompson's office, especially pay rolls, there were names of individuals that I am sure never worked for the Division. Whether the paychecks when cashed were forged or not we will never know.

One name in particular caused considerable speculation, for it was that of B. Rider.

I believe no one in the Division was more friendly and stout supporter of Thompson than Chief Deputy Bill Rider.

The late Cecil Metcalf (Deputy State Forester) told me privately once that he was in Saeto at this time and Rider called him into his office and closed the door. Rider told Metcalf of the latest turn of events. He broke down and wept and said, "I guess Frank is going to get me sent to jail."

CR. '74

Thompson was said to have been in Hawaii after Pearl Harbor and wrangled a job as an expert in clearing debris from the harbor. He had a quick mind, no conscience, and limitless gall. He had been sent to California to attend Stanford U. Louis O'Neil had been a classmate in law school with Thompson's father. Supervisor McKinnon, the boss supervisor of Santa Clara County had once been Sheriff of the county which includes Honolulu.

CR. '79